

NEW YORK STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

# Pro Bono News

2022 Empire State Counsel® Spotlight Edition



EMPIRE STATE  
COUNSEL®

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## Message from Immediate Past President **T. Andrew Brown**

It is difficult for me to come to grips with the fact that when this article is published, several months will have elapsed since the completion of my term as the 123rd President of the New York State Bar Association.

Since I left office, I have had the opportunity to reflect on the accomplishments of the Association during my term, as well as the disappointments, particularly the disappointment resulting from the fact that my presidency was entirely virtual – no live events or interaction, and no travel.

Nevertheless, one thing that stands out – and is a source of great pride to me – is the selfless pro bono service performed by so many of our members during this most difficult and demanding year.

One such group of dedicated pro bono volunteers were those individuals and firms that were recognized for their extraordinary pro bono service as Empire State Counsel at the 2021 Justice for All Ceremony. I, along with then President Elect T. Andrew Brown, Edwina Martin, Tiffany Liston and Past President Michael Miller – had the privilege of introducing and honoring these worthy professionals.

The ceremony was made even more memorable by the participation (albeit virtual) of New York’s Chief Judge Janet DiFiore, Deputy Chief Administrative Judge Edwina Mendelson and Attorney General Letitia James.

The honorees included those lawyers who earned the coveted designation as Empire State Counsel by performing 50 hours or more of pro bono service in 2020.

We also recognized four individual attorneys and six law firms for their extraordinary pro bono service for the public good.

The individual honorees included pro bono volunteers Anne Sargent Arcano and Richard Mancino; and Erica Gomez and Gary B. Friedman, recipients of the 2020 COVID-19 Pro Bono Surrogate’s Court Initiative Award.

With respect to firms, we recognized the downstate firms of Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom, LLP; Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison; and Kirkland & Ellis LLP. The upstate firms receiving recognition included Barclay Damon LLP; Phillips Lytle LLP; and Copps DiPaola Silverman, PLLC.

The ceremony served as a reminder of the importance of pro bono work.

Especially in the time of a pandemic, it is not just the right thing to do – it is the essential thing to do. This is our calling as lawyers. We are the guardians of justice. A guardian’s role is to protect and defend. As lawyers, our charge is to use our unique knowledge and abilities to seek justice for our clients, including those clients who are in dire need of our services but are not in a position to compensate us. We most faithfully fulfill our calling when we use our skills to help people who would otherwise be without protection, without defense.

Equal justice is the bedrock principle of our nation. Without equal justice the phrase from the Declaration of Independence, “[A]ll men are created equal” – is hollow. Without justice, evenly applied, the “unalienable rights” of “Life, Liberty, the pursuit of Happiness” are mere words.

There is no higher form of public service than working pro bono publico; i.e., working for the public good to ensure access to equal justice. Every time we help one person, right one wrong, we are one step closer to living up to the promise of our nation.

# 2021 Participating Firms

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Alston & Bird LLP  
Axinn, Veltrop & Harkrider LLP  
Ballard Spahr LLP  
Barclay Damon, LLP  
Bond, Schoeneck & King PLLC  
Copps DiPaola Silverman, PLLC  
Crowell & Moring LLP  
Dentons LLP  
Fish & Richardson P.C.  
Foley Hoag LLP  
Hogan Lovells LLP  
Holland & Knight LLP  
Katten Muchin Rosenman LLP  
Kirkland & Ellis LLP  
Linklaters LLP  
Loeb & Loeb LLP  
Lowenstein Sandler LLP  
Manatt, Phelps & Phillips, LLP  
Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe LLP  
Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP  
Phillips Lytle LLP  
Proskauer Rose LLP  
Ropes & Gray LLP  
Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP  
Sullivan & Cromwell LLP  
Weil, Gotshal & Manges LLP  
Willkie Farr & Gallagher LLP

# 2022 Empire State Counsel® Outstanding Pro Bono Volunteers and Law Firm Honorees

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## Outstanding Pro Bono Volunteers

**Lauren Breslow, Esq.**

The Elizabeth Haub School of Law at Pace University

**Elissa Hecker, Esq.**

Law Office of Elissa Hecker

## Law Firm Honorees

**Barclay Damon LLP**

**Bond Schoeneck & King, PLLC**

**Hogan Lovells LLP**

**Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP**

**Phillips Lytle LLP**

**Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP**

## Special Recognition Award

**Copps DiPaola Silverman, PLLC**

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**Special thank you to the committee co-chairs for selecting this year's award winners.**

## Committee on Legal Aid

**Sally Curran, Esq.**, *Executive Director at Volunteer Lawyers Project of Onondaga County, Inc*

**Adriene Holder, Esq.**, *Attorney -in-charge Civil Practice at The Legal Aid Society*

## President's Committee on Access to Justice

**Sherry Levin Wallach, Esq.**, *New York State Bar Association President-Elect and Deputy Executive Director, The Westchester County Legal Aid Society.*

**Edwina Frances Martin, Esq.**, *Commissioner and Public Administrator, Richmond County*

**Tiffany Liston, Esq.**, *Executive Director, Mobilization for Justice, Inc.*



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# Outstanding Pro Bono Volunteers

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**Lauren Hammer Breslow, Esq.**  
The Elizabeth Haub School of Law at  
Pace University

Lauren Hammer Breslow is a lawyer, philanthropic advisor, and non-profit executive, with a specialty in bioethics and scientific grants programs. She served as Executive Director of The Sohn Conference Foundation, a New York City-based public charity that funds pediatric cancer research. Ms. Breslow also co-founded Philanthropy Advisory Group, a consultancy that helps philanthropists and foundations make strategic grants, especially in medical and scientific research. In her role as a philanthropic advisor, Ms. Breslow has served as a foundation representative on scientific award committees, and she has overseen the distribution of \$60M+ in philanthropic funds.

Ms. Breslow is an Adjunct Professor of Law at the Elisabeth Haub School of Law at Pace University, where she teaches Bioethics. She also serves on the Internal Review Board at The Rockefeller University as well as Tri-SCI Embryo Stem Cell Research Oversight Committee, which reviews qualifying research at three institutions: Memorial-Sloan Kettering Cancer Research Center, Weill Cornell Medical College, and The Rockefeller University. Ms. Breslow provides pro bono services to the housing unit at Legal Services of the Hudson Valley in New York and The Promise of Justice Initiative in Louisiana, which provides services to individuals convicted by non-unanimous juries. She is an elected member of the Scarsdale School Board Nominating Committee, and she volunteers for WJCS's care program.

Ms. Breslow received her JD from Harvard Law School, MPH from the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, and BA from Harvard University, all with honors. She clerked for the Honorable Barbara Jones of the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York. She is a member of the New York State Bar Association and admitted to practice in the Southern and Eastern Districts of New York.



# Outstanding Pro Bono Volunteers

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**Elissa Hecker, Esq.**  
Law Office of Elissa Hecker

A long-standing New York Super Lawyer, as well as Top Attorney – New York Metro Area’s Outstanding Lawyer, and recognized as among The Best Lawyers in America (Copyright Law) practicing in the entertainment and business fields, Ms. Hecker has a wide range of experience in corporate, copyright, and trademark law, with clients encompassing a large spectrum of the business and entertainment world. She is an articulate, persuasive, communicator with polished presentation skills.

Ms. Hecker’s goal as an attorney is to help resolve legal and business affairs issues, enabling her clients to do what it is that they do best, running and growing their businesses/brands, acquiring deals and investors, creating, and acquiring commissions, and moving forward. Her approach is to listen carefully, advocate, and negotiate on her clients’ behalf and make sure that all their questions and issues are properly addressed.

In addition to her private practice, she has edited the following Entertainment Litigation Books – Know the Issues and Avoid the Courtroom, In the Arena and Counseling Content Providers in the Digital Age.

Since its inception, she has been Chair of the Board of Directors of Dance/NYC, and Past Chair of the Entertainment, Arts and Sports Law (EASL) Section of the New York State Bar Association, Editor of the EASL Journal, and Co-Chair and founder of the EASL Pro Bono Committee, as well as editor of the EASL Blog.

Ms. Hecker is also frequent author, lecturer and panelist, and past Trustee of the Copyright Society of the U.S.A. (CSUSA), and Associate Editor and member of the Board of Editors for The Journal of the CSUSA.

# Law Firm Honorees

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The logo for Barclay Damon LLP is displayed on a solid blue rectangular background. The word "BARCLAY" is written in white, uppercase, sans-serif font at the top. Below it, the word "DAMON" is written in the same font, with "LLP" in a smaller font size to its right.

## Barclay Damon LLP

Barclay Damon has a proud history of giving back to the communities it serves, with an emphasis on using its skills, time, and ingenuity to narrow the gap between those in need who seek legal assistance and access to justice. Its commitment to pro bono work runs deep and is a critical part of the firm's core culture.

For the last several years, every one of the law firm's full-time attorneys has provided pro bono legal services to low-income individuals in the communities it serves. In the last completed year, the firm dedicated more than 2,500 hours of time valued at nearly \$750,000 to pro bono efforts, with attorneys actively participating in firm-sponsored family court clinics, litigating civil rights violations, drafting wills for veterans, assisting with clemency applications, and providing online legal aid through initiatives such as the American Bar Association's Free Legal Answers program. The firm's investment in communities across its office platform supported legal matters involving many of today's critical issues, including immigration, housing, women's rights, prisoners' rights, community building, and economic development, among others.

As a firm that has been in existence since 1855, a strong commitment to pro bono service has been a priority for Barclay Damon at every stage of the firm's development. Now a leading law firm with offices across the Northeastern United States and in Toronto, the firm has more reason than ever to give generously of their time, talent, and passion for pro bono service.



## Bond Schoeneck & King, PLLC

Bond, Schoeneck & King provides a complete range of legal services to local, regional, and national clients. Since our founding in 1897, It has developed a reputation for professional excellence, integrity, and success. What began as a boutique law firm consisting of three attorneys has grown to a nationally ranked, full-service law firm of 250 attorneys, thirty-nine paralegals and 155 staff members. From its origin in Syracuse, New York, the firm has expanded to nine offices across New York State, as well as locations in Boston, Kansas City, Red Bank, New Jersey and Naples, Florida.

The attorneys at Bond, Schoeneck & King are committed to providing pro bono legal services to individuals and organizations throughout New York State. Whether it is advising an organization on the legalities surrounding formation of a non-profit agency or helping a tenant remain in an apartment and not become homeless or representing incarcerated individuals, who are bringing federal or state civil rights claims, these services are provided with professionalism and compassion. Bond attorneys devote hundreds of hours each year to pro bono representation.

Additionally, in its communities, Bond attorneys serve on the boards of more than one hundred entities, including legal aid societies, Boys and Girls Clubs, and various YMCA and YWCAs.

In late 2015, the Firm was honored by the dedication of the George H. Lowe Center for Justice in Syracuse, New York. Named after Bond attorney and retired United States Magistrate Judge George H. Lowe, the Center for Justice brings Legal Services of Central New York, Legal Aid Society of Mid-New York, and the Volunteer Lawyers Project of CNY, Inc. together under one roof, improving access to legal representation for the indigent.



# Hogan Lovells

## Hogan Lovells

As the first law firm to establish a formal pro bono practice more than a half-century ago, Hogan Lovells has been a pioneer in the provision of free legal services to those in need.

Each year, its lawyers devote more than 100,000 hours to pro bono. While facing a global pandemic, Hogan Lovells delivered its strongest pro bono performance yet, focusing on addressing racial inequities through criminal justice reform, housing, and economic justice, and voting rights.

Most recently, following the effective collapse of the Afghan government in mid-August, the firm quickly mobilized in response to the burgeoning humanitarian crisis. More than two hundred volunteers across 14 U.S. offices have assisted hundreds of individuals fleeing the Taliban and seeking immigration relief. Its New York colleagues have been particularly active in representing at-risk Afghans, including female athletes, politicians, and activists; members of ethnic and religious minorities; and U.S. military interpreters and allies.

Hogan Lovells' pro bono practice draws on the experience of its professionals worldwide to improve the lives of those most in need and least able to pay. Whether by acting on behalf of individual clients, meeting the legal needs of nonprofit organizations, or through policy advocacy and impact litigation, its goal is to tackle injustice on a global scale.

# Paul | Weiss

## Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP

Paul, Weiss is committed to providing impactful pro bono legal assistance to individuals and organizations in need. Its program is all-encompassing, spanning the core issues facing our society.

Throughout the firm's history, it has maintained an unwavering commitment to providing pro bono legal assistance to the most vulnerable members of our society and in support of the public interest. This commitment is a part of the firm's identity, and is embraced by every member of the Paul, Weiss community, from the most senior leaders across all departments to the summer associates who join the firm each year.

From helping Thurgood Marshall reverse the doctrine of "separate but equal" in *Brown v. Board of Education* to representing Edith Windsor in challenging the Defense of Marriage Act in *United States v. Windsor*, its attorneys have achieved landmark victories in civil rights cases that have changed society for the better. Paul, Weiss lawyers participate in all levels of pro bono work, working directly with individual clients, non-profits, and small businesses in a wide range of substantive areas, as well as handling appeals and drafting key amicus briefs before the Supreme Court.



# Phillips Lytle LLP

## Phillips Lytle LLP

Pro bono work has been an important commitment for Phillips Lytle throughout its 185+ history. Across all its eight offices (six of which are in New York State), its more than 190 attorneys on staff are dedicated to providing legal services to the poor, the disadvantaged and those in need. The legal services the firm provides also benefit organizations and institutions that assist the indigent and contribute to the quality of life in its communities. This work includes civil and criminal matters, and non-litigation legal assistance, ranging from matters that broadly impact communities, to representation of those in need in high-volume court settings, to complex individual case representations.



# Skadden

## Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP

Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP and affiliates strongly encourages its lawyers, summer associates, and professional staff to work on pro bono matters for individuals and groups that are unable to afford legal services. The firm is a charter signatory to the Law Firm Pro Bono Challenge, whereby Skadden pledges that attorneys and summer associates from its domestic offices will dedicate time equivalent to at least 3% of their annual billable hours to work on pro bono matters.

In the first 11 months of 2020, attorneys and summer associates from Skadden's domestic offices dedicated to pro bono 9.7% of time billed. Firmwide, Skadden attorneys, summer associates, and professional staff recorded 237,000.00 hours of pro bono work from December 1, 2019, through November 30, 2020.

Deeply ingrained in the firm's culture, pro bono work provides vital help to a wide variety of individuals and organizations in need of legal assistance. Skadden attorneys regularly assist those seeking asylum in the United States and elsewhere in their attempts to escape persecution due to religious or political beliefs or sexual orientation. Attorneys handle many cases for death row inmates; take on numerous matters involving wrongful imprisonment and prosecution, housing disputes, veterans matters, family law and micro-entrepreneurs. Skadden Attorneys frequently provide legal assistance to legal service organizations and other nonprofits on a wide variety of issues including corporate governance, intellectual property, real estate, employment, and potential and actual mergers.

# Special Recognition Award

# COPPS DiPAOLA SILVERMAN, PLLC

## Copps DiPaola Silverman, PLLC

The mission of Copps DiPaola Silverman, PLLC is to provide skilled advocacy and knowledge to their clients in the cutting-edge areas of Family Law, Adoption, Surrogacy, Assisted Reproduction Technology, Estate Planning & Probate and Guardianship. They bring those very same principals to the community through pro bono advocacy for the underserved populations throughout the Capital District of New York.

Copps DiPaola attorneys volunteer every month to provide pro bono legal assistance for those in need through Albany County Bar Association's Family Court Help Center. The firm provides paralegal support and calendaring services for the Help Center at no charge to the Albany County Bar Association to ensure that it continues to operate. The attorneys provide training for Help Center volunteers, volunteer, and donate because they know that in order for programs like this to continue, we must lead by example.

In addition to the Help Center, the Attorneys provide countless hours of direct pro bono services to helping survivors of domestic violence secure civil orders of protection, divorce their abusers, obtain custody of their children, and secure child and spousal support, all of which help further the safety and independence of survivors. They care and are committed to ensuring justice for all.



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## 2021 HONOREES

**Pro Bono changes lives. The Empire State Counsel® Program recognizes our members' pro bono contributions. By donating their time and expertise our members help low-income and vulnerable persons, who otherwise could not afford an attorney, gain access to the civil justice system. Since the program launched in 2006, our members have donated almost 1.6 million pro bono hours. The program also recognizes the law firms that support and encourage pro bono.**

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